

CERTIFIED SENIOR CENTER FUNDING

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Senior Center Certification Program

- Voluntary, self-evaluation process
- Purpose is to strengthen capacity of senior centers by providing a set of measurable indicators of best practice
- Examines/promotes best practices in 5 major operational areas: 1) outreach and access to services; 2) programs and activities; 3) planning, evaluation, and input from older adults; 4) staffing; and 5) operations (including training) and physical plant
- Benefits include strengthening operations and programming, accountability, professionalism, and leveraging state and local support
- Two levels of certification-Center of Merit and Center of Excellence
- Currently 164 senior centers- 61 Excellent, 5 Merit. Total=66
- 40% of the state's centers are certified

Senior Center General Purpose Funding

- Used for any purpose that supports senior center operations or development
- Incentive for centers to invest in certification and meet the requirements
- Allocated to all centers based on shares, with certified centers receiving more shares
- The increase in the number of centers (certified and noncertified), along with level funding, decreases the share amount each center receives, pressuring the available state support

Request

- \$750,000 in recurring funds
- For certified centers only
- Provide additional incentive for centers to achieve and maintain certification
- Allocated by formula based on shares annually determined by the Division
- Protects against financial loss and benefits all centers

Support

- Demographics in NC indicate a continued need for senior centers
- This year spent examining effect of certification process on the performance of senior centers
- Follow-up to 2001 Senior Center Capacity Survey:
 - **Forty percent of centers listed the increased funding alone or in combination with other benefits as the greatest benefit of certification**
 - Centers that are currently certified are significantly more likely to serve more men, ethnic minority groups, the oldest old and those with sensory impairments than in 2001 (see Table 1 next page)

Table 1

<i>Total Number of Participants</i>	<i>% increased currently certified</i>	<i>% increased non certified</i>
Men	90.0	67.6
Members of ethnic minority groups	64.1	34.4
Participants ages 70-79	82.5	60.0
Participants ages 80-89	77.5	40.00
Participants ages 90+	46.2	27.3
Participants with sensory impairments (blindness, deafness)	46.2	27.3

- On average, certified centers offered more services at the centers than noncertified centers. Some of the most significant are highlighted below in Table 2:

Table 2

<i>Services</i>	<i>% provided at center by certified centers</i>	<i>% provided at center by noncertified centers</i>
Tax preparation	85.0	64.9
Legal services	82.5	59.5
Medical transportation	77.5	40.5
Caregivers' classes	65.0	43.2
Family support groups	65.0	48.2
Housing	22.5	8.1
Reverse Mortgage Counseling	42.5	24.3
Home repair/modification	42.5	21.6
Job training	75.0	35.1
Job placement	50.0	18.9

- Certified centers report significantly more classes and activities for their participants- both in regularly scheduled activities and in special events
- Table 3 below shows the changes that certified centers reported making to become certified or because they have been certified:

Table 3

<i>Change Due to Certification</i>	<i>% of centers</i>
Greater involvement of older adults in planning and programming	82.5
Engage in more advocacy	82.5
Raised community awareness about the center	72.5
More classes	70.0
Increased outreach to underserved	67.5
Increased partnerships with other agencies	67.5
Access to more services	60.0
Purchased more equipment/materials	57.5
Serve more older adults and caregivers	52.5

- Some comments from certified centers:
 - “We are recognized with pride throughout the community. Other agencies and community members value the senior center more because we have achieved a state certification. While certification is hard work, it forces us to examine our weaknesses regularly and take appropriate action to better serve our community.”
 - “For our seniors, it has been better access to services and added programming. For staff, it has been more credibility with our parent organization. We also are always critiquing our services and programs, offering more advocacy and including more minority groups.”
 - “Raising community awareness about senior centers’ services and expanding collaboration with many agencies linking senior citizens with resources in our area.”
 - “We are proud of our certification and use this as a marketing tool. It has been helpful in securing additional funding from local government. This has enabled us to hire more staff to implement additional programs and services and increase participation.”

Additional Support

- The Senior Tar Heel Legislature and the Governors Advisory Council both support additional funding for senior centers
- The NC Senior Center Alliance supports state funding that specifically supports the certification incentive/award

Conclusion

- Centers are struggling with adjusting to a future of serving today’s seniors and aging boomers with limited resources, weak economy and rising costs
- Certification results in significant, positive changes and ensures that senior center programming maintains quality and meets high standards
- Additional money needs to be allocated to ensure that the centers’ service delivery systems are maintained with the increase in the number of both certified and noncertified senior centers.